

## EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS

***NOTE: States are to provide evaluation and progress updates for the last complete FFY period (i.e. 2006)<sup>1</sup>. Progress is measured against the goals set for that year and/or prior FFY performance. Nevertheless, whenever possible, this Attachment contains the most current information available. AZRSA and the SRC have jointly prepared this evaluation report .***

### STRATEGIC PLAN

- A. AN EVALUATION OF EXTENT TO WHICH THE PRIOR YEAR'S GOALS (FY 2006) WERE ACHIEVED;**
- B. THE STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES; AND**
- C. THE FACTORS THAT IMPEDED THEIR ACHIEVEMENT, TO THE EXTENT THEY WERE NOT ACHIEVED**

***Goal 1: To increase salary levels and improve benefit packages for AZRSA staff so that AZRSA can effectively compete for and retain qualified staff.***

#### **A. Evaluation of the Extent to Which Goals Were Achieved:**

Salary levels and benefit packages were improved for staff as follows:

- AZRSA successfully transitioned VR offices to tech offices. A total of 67 Payment and Purchasing Technician (PPT) positions were established, as result of both reclassified and new positions to the Administrative Assistant II (grade 15) series, increasing compensation package amounts.
- A new salary package for VR counselors was implemented in late 2006 to include a pay differential for those VR counselors that meet the CSPD requirements the following activities have occurred:
  - VR counselors meeting qualified staff standards for the counselor series included the Rehabilitation Services Specialist III, Program Representative, Rehabilitation Teacher, Orientation and Mobility Specialist and Rehabilitation Supervisor. The salary grades and Special Recruitment Rates (SSR) were adjusted and incumbents' salaries were increased to the new SSR or by 2.5%, whichever was the greatest amount.
  - The special recruitment rate for the Rehabilitation Services Specialist III, grade 18, is \$36,026.
  - The special recruitment rate for the Rehabilitation Instructional Services Specialist, grade 18, is \$36,026.
  - The special recruitment rate for the Rehabilitation Program Representative, grade 18, is \$39,337.
  - The special recruitment rate for the Rehabilitation Services Supervisor, grade 20, is \$39,337.

<sup>1</sup> Based on advice from the State Plan teleconferences with Federal RSA

#### 4.11(e)(2) Evaluation and Reports of Progress

- An Educational/Certification Stipend of \$1,000 was established for current and new staff in the above classifications who meet the qualified staff standard. Employees received adjustments to their pay in late January and February, 2007, with payments retroactive to July 1, 2006.
- A \$1,000 bilingual stipend is offered to VR counselors who are fluent in a second language and pass certification requirements.

#### **B. Strategies Used to Achieve Goal:**

- Transition VR offices to tech offices by reclassifying vacant positions as they occur.
- Implement a salary plan for counselors, to include a pay differential for those counselors that meet the CSPD requirements.

#### **C. Factors Impeding Achievement of Goal:**

- Since 2006, significant progress has been made in improving and increasing VR counselor and support staff salaries to be within the competitive range with salaries across the US. Based on data from the American Institutes for Research in 2003, the average state Master's degree level VR counselor salary is \$38,979 (Chan, 2003)<sup>2</sup>. AZRSA's newly established VR counselor recruitment rate (\$36,026) is within approximately 1% of the national average.
- Because salary is one of the factors impeding retention and recruitment of VR counselors (Chan, 2003), it is imperative for AZRSA to continually assess staff salaries and make adjustments to remain competitive in the labor marketplace.

#### **Goal 2: To provide exceptional services to VR consumers.**

#### **“Exceptional services” specifically relates to:**

- The level of the VR consumer's involvement in decision making and making informed choices;
- The appropriateness, timeliness, quality and extent of services received by the consumer; and
- The consumer's satisfaction with the job obtained as a result of VR services.

#### **A. Evaluation of the Extent to Which Goals Were Achieved:**

AZRSA surpassed the VR Consumer Satisfaction goal, in the targeted 80% range, by achieving a consumer satisfaction rate of 82.3% for SFY 2006. The *SFY 2006 VR Consumer Satisfaction Survey* surveyed consumers of VR services to determine level of satisfaction with services provided. The areas measured were satisfaction with: 1) decision making and making choices; 2) appropriateness, timeliness, quality, and extent of services; 3) the job obtained as a result of VR services, and; 4) overall satisfaction.

- Eighty-three percent (82.3%) of all respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied overall with the services they received, about the same as last year

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<sup>2</sup> Chan, Tsze. (2003). *Recruiting and Retaining Professional Staff in State VR Agencies: Some Preliminary Studies from the RSA Evaluation Study*. <http://www.air.org/>

(83%). Only 8.9% of respondents indicated that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied overall with the services they received.

- Eighty-one point five percent (81.5%) of all respondents reported satisfaction with their level of involvement with decision making and choices of VR services, comparable to last year's figure (82%).
- Seventy-five percent (75%) of respondents who received services under a rehabilitation plan (status 26 & status 28) reported satisfaction with the composite dimension of appropriateness, timeliness, quality, and extent of services. This is the same as last year.
- Eighty-three percent (83%) of consumers successfully rehabilitated (status 26) reported satisfaction with the job the obtained as a result of VR services, a statistically significant increase from last year's seventy-five (75%).
- In the specific responses to the open-ended questions consumers most frequently mentioned the VR counselor and non-specific staff as aspects of services that they liked the best. The most frequently reported specific element that consumers disliked was that the process was slow and bureaucratic. These results were similar to last year's findings.

#### ***SFY 2006 VR CONSUMER SATISFACTIONSURVEY RESULTS***

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>SFY 2005</b>	<b>SFY 2006</b>
<i>1. Overall (All Respondents)</i>	83%	82%
<i>2. Involvement/Choice (All Respondents)</i>	82%	82%
<i>3. Approp, Timely, Quality, Extent (26 &amp; 28)</i>	75%	75%
<i>4. Job Obtained (Status 26)</i>	75%	83%

In the area of developing tools and making policy and procedural changes to increase consumer control for their own rehabilitation while actively participating throughout the rehabilitation process, AZRSA has made the following changes:

1. Reinforcement and increased monitoring of regular counselor-client communication via case reviews and feedback: AZRSA VR policy instructs the VR counselor to contact clients at least every 90 days, to ensure communication and client participation throughout the rehabilitation process.
2. To ensure timeliness of services, appropriate use of assessments, and quality vocational outcomes, the development and implementation of "partial" IPEs is no longer an acceptable practice. Thus, instructions in the development of "partial" IPEs have been removed from the VR policy manual. The revised policy

instructs VR staff to develop and implement complete IPEs within 120 days of eligibility, with exceptions, as appropriate. This time-frame encourages the VR counselor and client to obtain information from assessments and activities (not limited to vocational evaluations, career exploration, situational assessments, etc.) to make informed decisions on an achievable employment outcome.

3. To improve timeliness of eligibility determination and to improve documentation of presumptive eligibility: All VR supervisors are mandated to conduct regular case reviews, and to review Client Action Alert lists on a regular basis to ensure presumptive eligibility is documented and to monitor compliance with the 60 day eligibility time-limit. If eligibility cannot be determined within 60 days, VR counselors must staff the case with the supervisor and complete the required documentation for an extension.
4. The AZRSA VR policy manual is in the process of revision to improve understanding of VR programmatic and procedural elements, to ensure a more reader-friendly format, and to align with changes in Federal RSA guidelines. The final product will be available in accessible formats and will be posted on the AZRSA Internet in late 2007. In addition to the activities listed above, access to the VR policy manual promotes clients' active participation in the VR program and control of their rehabilitation.
5. Focus Group meetings with consumers, advocates, partners, stakeholders and the general public continue to be held in various locations (rural and urban) across the state. Feedback regarding customer service, service delivery, program policies and procedures, training and employment was requested to ascertain areas needing improvement in the VR program.

#### **B. Strategies Used to Achieve Goal:**

- Assess VR consumer satisfaction via focus groups and distribution of satisfaction surveys.
- Conduct case reviews on a regular basis to monitor policy compliance at the established 90% level.
- Develop tools and establish policy and procedural changes to increase consumer control for their own rehabilitation while actively participating throughout the rehabilitation process.

#### **C. Factors Impeding Achievement of Goal:**

- Although AZRSA has achieved its goal of 80% consumer satisfaction, factors impeding consumer satisfaction are:
  - Slow duration of the rehabilitation process and time-consuming procedures, (i.e. lengthy VR application form, wait time for establishing eligibility, and bureaucratic paperwork)
  - Staff turnover and vacant case load coverage
  - Inexperienced VR counselors (new hires)

***Goal 3: To provide exceptional services to employers, increasing the number and quality of jobs available for persons with disabilities who are clients of the VR program.***

**A. Evaluation of the Extent to Which Goals Were Achieved:**

AZRSA continues partnership with the Employment Administration (EA) as a single point of contact for the Employers Disability Resources Network (EDRN). The AZRSA Employment Services Coordinator and the EA Employment Relations Coordinator maintain collaborative relationship for employer related activities. This relationship focuses on a consultation role for both AZRSA and EA in the areas of disability awareness, resources, and assistive technology for employers. AZRSA participates in a variety of community and organizational activities dedicated toward increasing the employment of diverse populations. AZRSA and EA jointly attend employer networking meetings and have been involved in joint training presentations.

AZRSA participated in Career Expo in 2006 and in 2007 (sponsored by the Arizona Employers' Advisory Council and hosted by the Arizona Workforce Connection/Valley Employment Partnership which consists of the Arizona Department of Economic Security, Maricopa Workforce Connection and the Phoenix Workforce Connection), which has been identified by the US Department of Labor as being the largest job fair in the United States for the past four years. Over 235 employers participated. AZRSA provided information about VR services, accessibility in the workplace, and assistive technology to individuals with disabilities and to employers. AZRSA also coordinated an on-site sign language interpreter service.

AZRSA encourages VR clients to pre-register with Job Service to streamline access to employment opportunities.

AZRSA utilizes grant funding from the Department of Labor (DOL) to place Disability Program Navigators (DPNs) in the One-Stop Career Centers statewide. The DPN assist people with disabilities to access a wide variety of programs available to support successful entry or re-entry into the workforce and provides disability awareness education to employers. Additional DPNs have been placed at the One-Stop Career Centers statewide (Yuma, Tucson, Nogales, Phoenix, Gilbert, Globe Miami, Flagstaff, Avondale, Prescott, Cottonwood, Kingman, Show Low) to raise awareness of accessibility, accommodations, assistive technology, as well as, creating system change for the inclusion of persons with disabilities at the One-Stop Career Centers. The DPN program has secured \$1.6 million in funding until June 30, 2007, and AZRSA has expanded the program to 17 DPNs positions statewide. An increase in consumers with disabilities has been directly attributed to the outreach, and the improvements in customer service. An audit conducted by the Department of Labor in March, 2006 concluded that significant changes in service delivery and accessibility had been made and the One Stop Career Centers were compliant. The DPN continues to focus on the WIA workforce being accessible to all One-Stop Career Centers.

AZRSA continues to increase feedback from employers by soliciting comments through discussion and evaluation forms as appropriate. AZRSA attends meetings and trainings of employers throughout the year with various partners. Immediate feedback is received at the time of the meetings through discussion or evaluation.

AZRSA has recently assigned a business point of contact with the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) national VR business network, to develop relationships with employers and to expand job opportunities for clients.

**B. Strategies Used to Achieve Goal:**

- Partner with the Employment Administration (EA) and the Employers Disability Resource Network (EDRN), a coalition of employment and rehabilitation organizations who are available to provide employers information and resources.
- Place DPNs at One-Stop Career Centers statewide to educate employers about the benefits of employing individuals with disabilities, and to increase job opportunities for individuals with disabilities.
- Attend and participate in job fairs statewide to promote VR services to employers and to job-seekers with disabilities.
- Increase networking opportunities with employers.

**C. Factors Impeding Achievement of Goal:**

- Vacancy of the VR Employer Relations Coordinator (anticipated to be filled by June, 2007).
- Employers' reluctance to hire individuals with disabilities.
- Lack of visibility of the VR program and its benefits and services to employers and individuals with disabilities.
- Insufficient networking with employers statewide.

***Goal 4: To expand the use of VR program resources to help more consumers (including those currently served and underserved) achieve meaningful jobs.***

**A. Evaluation of the Extent to Which Goals Were Achieved:**

***One-Stop Workforce Development Centers as a Significant Resource for Individuals with Disabilities***

Hiring and training Disability Program Navigators (DPNs):

- AZRSA works closely with One-Stop Career Centers, outstations staff and engages in joint activities to increase capacity to serve disabled populations through the following: a total of 17 DPNs, located in One-Stop Career Centers throughout the state, have been hired to assist consumers, partners, and employers to navigate the One-Stop Career Center services and resources.

Increasing accessibility for individuals with disabilities:

- DPNs play a significant role in removing barriers for persons with disabilities entering the job market and accessing employment services. One-Stop Career Center staff depend on DPNs for technical and resource assistance in disability and employment related issues. DPNs continually provide One-Stop Career Center staff training on accessibility, Assistive Technology, disability awareness, community resources, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

***Services to Native Americans with Disabilities***

Memos of Understanding (MOU) have been established with the following Native American Tribes (Federal 121-VR projects): Fort Mohave, Navajo Nation, Tohono O'Odham, White Mountain Apache, and Hopi. The MOUs coordinate VR programming for eligible Native Americans with disabilities residing within or near the boundaries of each respective tribal

entity. The latter MOUs permit both Tribal VR programs and State VR programs to serve Native American clients under both Federal grants, allowing for greater service provision.

- The following services for groups of individuals with disabilities have been established by AZRSA to develop, and improve community rehabilitation programs for Native Americans:
- City of Phoenix Clear Path Tribal program: Provides outreach to Tribal members who reside in Phoenix and in the Gila River Indian Community.
- Helping Hands: Establishment of transportation services for individuals with disabilities residing in the Navajo Nation, Page, and surrounding areas so that they may have the opportunity to work.
- Northern Arizona Behavioral Health Association: Establishment of “Tailgate Café”, a VR client-run business which provides training and employment opportunities in food service for Apache Tribe members diagnosed with serious mental illness.

### ***Services to Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers***

AZRSA participates in ongoing efforts to outreach individuals with disabilities from minority and disability populations who may be unserved or underserved. AZRSA collaborates with Employment Administration (EA) Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers Outreach Program, and other Department of Economic Security employment programs. In partnership with the JOBS, Job Service and Unemployment Insurance programs, the first annual Farm Worker Appreciation Day was held in San Luis, Arizona in December of 2006. Funds provided by the US Department of Labor were utilized to reach out to the farm worker community, many of whom may qualify for services, but cannot access services during the work day. The event was created as a means of raising awareness of the programs and services offered by AZRSA and partners in the community. Nearly 40 agencies and businesses participated in the event.

To further develop outreach activities in Yuma County, the Yuma Farm Worker Coalition/Vocational Rehabilitation Task Force is developing a model project to increase farm worker awareness and accessibility to VR services. The Task Force is focusing on improving outreach to underserved populations, using the *promotores* model for delivering information and promoting community awareness of the VR program.

The transition of VR offices to tech offices is complete. Purchasing and Payment technicians release VR counselors from procurement functions; thus allowing VR counselors more time to provide vocational rehabilitation counseling and guidance.

### ***Services to Consumers with Serious Mental Illness***

AZRSA has renewed the Interagency Service Agreement (ISA) with the ADHS/ DBHS to serve individuals with serious mental illnesses (SMI). This ISA contains joint vision and mission statements and sets overall policy for services to clients/members of both agencies. It emphasizes the relationship between mental health and work and the need for both agencies to integrate the concept of work into everything that is done for, and with, clients/members.

Major provisions include:

- The establishment of an Advisory Committee that is made up of providers, consumers, and VR and Regional Behavioral Health Authorities (RBHA) management. This Advisory Committee meets quarterly.
- The development of Vocational Plans between AZRSA Districts and the local RBHAs. These plans contain goals, standards, referral procedures, joint training, etc.
- The ISA calls for extensive staff training and has developed a yearly training budget and calendar with the support of AZRSA staff. Training is provided to serve the needs of all stakeholders in this agreement, the consumers, providers of service, clinicians, and VR staff by dedicated trainers funded under this ISA.
- The ISA calls for dedicated VR Counselors who have been trained to work with individuals with SMI.
- In addition, the ISA assigns the responsibility to provide extended support services to the RBHA in each area of the state. The current ISA strengthens the commitment of ADHS/DBHS to fund extended support services following transition from VR services.
- Programs and services to groups creating competitive integrated employment opportunities for individuals with SMI include Café 54 in Tucson, and the Tailgate Café in Northern Arizona, which are consumer-run food service businesses.

***Collaboration within DES and with the Councils of Government (COG)***

AZRSA works within the DES and with the COGs in planning for the use of SSBG (Title XX) resources. AZRSA assists the DES and the COGs with planning on how to best use their portions of the SSBG resources. AZRSA has managed such resources to pay for the extended employment support services needed by VR clients with the most significant disabilities who are successfully rehabilitated in the VR program. AZRSA contracts these monies directly with private, non-profit community rehabilitation programs.

***Collaboration with Independent Living Centers (ILC)***

AZRSA has contracts with the major ILCs to provide benefits counseling for all VR clients receiving SSI or SSDI benefits. These contracts expand the ability of the ILCs to meet this need, and assist clients in making informed choices. AZRSA policies require VR counselors to refer such clients to the ILCs for this service both at the time they are planning in Individualized Plan for Employment and when preparing for VR closure.

***Comprehensive Adjustment Service to Adults Who are Blind and Visually Impaired***

AZRSA provides Rehabilitation Instructional Services, Adjustment to Disability, and Assistive Technology Services to assist clients in achieving meaningful employment. Comprehensive service delivery allows clients to receive multiple services, including Assistive Technology, in a coordinated, efficient and time-effective manner. RSA contracts with the following Community Resource Programs to provide comprehensive adjustment services: Foundation for Blind Children, Arizona Center for the Blind and Southern Arizona Association for the Visually Impaired, Colorado Center for the Blind, and Lion's World. AZRSA will evaluate these programs by the close of SFY 2007 in the following areas: program compliance, client-counselor satisfaction, best practices, client outcomes, and comprehensiveness of service delivery.



***Provision of Assistive Technology (AT) Services to Individuals with Disabilities***

AZRSA recognizes the impact of AT on accessibility to services and achievement of employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. Efforts to expand the availability of AT to VR clients include:

- Provision of AT training and devices throughout the rehabilitation process, for increased accessibility to services and in the workplace.
- Provision of AT equipment to One-Stop Career Centers across the state, such as power adjustable tables, fully adjustable ergonomic chairs, computer systems with products like JAWS, ZoomText, TextHelp, Dragon Naturally Speaking and alternative keyboards and mice available as well as FM systems, TTY, amplified phone, video phone in two sites and CCTV's.
- Educating employers on the benefits of AT and provide technical assistance in the work setting.
- "AT in the Saguaro" a comprehensive Assistive Technology Conference educates staff and clients in new advances in AT and is co-sponsored by AZRSA.
- Support training in the use of the Arizona Virtual One-Stop Internet-based One-Stop registration and job search database using AT products typically found in One-Stop locations.
- Offer five comprehensive adjustment programs serving adults who are blind or visually impaired that includes both training and provision AT necessary for employment. Three of those programs also serve transition age students. The comprehensive adjustment programs are also able to provide other necessary training and evaluation services as needed to address the full range of rehabilitation needs for clients.
- Increase availability and use of assistive technology devices to VR clients through the Arizona Technology Access Program AzTAP).

***Contracting***

AZRSA has contracts with over 150 private, non-profit community rehabilitation service providers in the State. Many of these contracts are for traditional job development and placement, work adjustment training, and supported employment services. Projects which were funded have created a greater variety of job placement opportunities for VR clients, development of training and adjustment programs for special populations, and technical assistance for AZRSA staff.

AZRSA is initiating a pilot project to change the way it purchases job development and placement, work adjustment training, and supported employment services. These are traditional services provided by CRPs (although private for profit companies have also begun providing such services to special populations). This coming year, AZRSA will be initiating Performance Based Contracting for these services on a pilot basis.

***Services to Juveniles with Disabilities***

Interagency Service Agreements (ISA) between AZRSA and Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections (ADJC), Maricopa County Juvenile Probation (MCJP) and Arizona

Supreme Court (ASC) to enable the VR program to provide services to youth offenders with disabilities.

***Transition Services to Youth with Disabilities***

AZRSA renewed the Interagency Agreement (ISA) with the Arizona Department of Education which allows for provision of VR services to youth in transition from school to work. The ISA provides a greater level of VR participation in serving students in schools which provide matching funds. This creates unequal opportunities for transition students in areas of the State where such agreements do not exist; therefore, AZRSA a waiver of statewideness is in effect.

Funds from school districts are used as match for federal dollars. AZRSA commits to the schools that a predetermined amount of the resulting resources will be used to initiate VR IPE services to students who have been certified VR eligible while they are still high school students.

**B. Strategies Used to Achieve Goal:**

- Support grant activities such as the One-Stop Navigator program, and AzTap program to expand services for individuals with disabilities.
- Collaborate with DES employment programs, Corrections, DBHS, Tribal entities, COGs, ILCs, Department of Education, and CRPs to enhance the availability of VR services and employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities, including the unserved and underserved.
- Contract with CRPs statewide that provide vocational preparation and employment services to individuals with disabilities.

**C. Factors Impeding Achievement of Goal:**

- The complexity of State government contracting and procurement procedures.
- The visibility and knowledge of VR services in the local community.
- Undeveloped/underdeveloped resources.
- New staff with limited training and experience.

***Goal 5: To assist consumers to achieve meaningful and sustained work as effectively and efficiently as possible***

**A. Evaluation of the Extent to Which Goals Were Achieved:**

The expansion of Navigators and co-location of VR staff within One-Stop Career Centers, which includes the AZRSA establishment grants in local communities, has been successful at raising awareness of accessibility, accommodations, assistive technology, and system changes for the inclusion of persons with disabilities. AZRSA establishment grants include expansion to Santa Cruz County (Nogales) and in Gila and Pinal Counties. The Navigators assist in the provision of reasonable accommodations, auxiliary aids and services, and rehabilitation technology for individuals with disabilities. They have been instrumental in promoting strong relationships with the 17 core partners, including youth programs, and improvement of services to persons with disabilities.

AZRSA's establishment grant to the Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired Inc., (ACBVI) in offering six training sessions in general disability awareness, assistive technology, legal aspects and accessibility, blindness, deafness and hard of hearing and cultural and ethical approaches for persons with disabilities at 19 comprehensive WIA One-Stop Career Centers statewide. The barriers are being removed and accessibility has seen marked improvement with education of staff and better access to adaptive technology for accommodations. The Website [www.atarizona.com](http://www.atarizona.com) has positively affected the community in being able find assistive technology and One-Stop services. The interactive website has education, links to providers, and the ability to contact and communicate with the general public. The collaborative effort between the "Navigators", AZRSA, ETA, DES, and the Arizona Freedom to Work (Work Incentive counselors) has all created system change. The inclusion of people with disabilities to participate in increased job seeking opportunities and provider services is significantly changing the outlook for employment for individuals with disabilities.

The AZRSA Navigator Grant, the WIA programs, and Employment Networks are all working hard to remove barriers to employment. Employers are involved through special programs, and Navigators are participating on employer committees and councils to inform the community of the network of services available to individuals with disabilities.

### **Ticket to Work (TTW)**

The TTW program is linked to partnerships, collaboration, and service integration activities for employment of people with disabilities. The TTW Federal regulations are changing and expected to be available in June 2006. The intent of the changes is to benefit ticket holders, Social Security beneficiaries, and their families to seek services and prepare to return to work. After over three years of outreach, the number of eligible ticket holders in Arizona was recently reduced by 30,000 due to no activation of the ticket in this same time period. The numbers currently reflect 175,263 eligible ticket holders in Arizona. Of this number, 1,538 are actively receiving services, or almost .09%. Most consumers who requested services in Arizona came to the AZRSA VR program (1,038 of 1,538). The growth of new beneficiaries in Arizona is expected to reach 4,000 to 6,000 a year. The Ticket to Work program wanted involvement of a greater number of Employment Networks (EN), however, the number of active EN in Arizona has decreased from a high of 27 down to 6. The complaint of many of the EN who stopped providing services under the TTW program was mainly about the payment system. The hope is that the new regulations will build stronger relationships and a better payment system for the EN and AZRSA.

### **Outreach to Employers**

AZRSA partners with the Employment Administration (EA) as a single point of contact for the Employers Disability Resources Network (EDRN). The AZRSA Employment Services Coordinator and the EA Employment Relations Coordinator maintain collaborative relationship for employer related activities. This relationship focuses on a consultation role for both AZRSA and EA in the areas of disability awareness, resources, and assistive technology for employers. AZRSA participates in a variety of community and organizational activities dedicated toward increasing the employment of diverse populations. AZRSA and EA jointly attend employer networking meetings and have been involved in joint training presentations.

**B. Strategies Used to Achieve Goal:**

- Co-location of WIA One-Stop Career Centers and improving the relationship between AZRSA and the One-Stop Career Centers by developing referral systems, referral tools and cross-training.
- Develop, implement and manage agreements between AZRSA and Employment Networks (EN) which improve the ability of consumers to achieve meaningful jobs.
- Organize and participate in job fairs statewide
- Seek additional strategies to improve employment outcomes for VR clients and the WIA connection customers.

**C. Factors Impeding Achievement of Goal:**

- Limited knowledge of VR services in the local business community.
- Insufficient long-term employment supports for AZRSA's clients needing such supports.

**D. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE PERFORMANCE OF THE STATE ON THE STANDARDS AND INDICATORS ESTABLISHED PURSUANT TO SECTION 106 OF THE ACT**

**Performance Indicator 1.1**

*The minimum requirement is that the State exceed the # of successful rehabilitations from the prior year.*

By September 30, 2006, AZRSA had 2,005 individuals with disabilities successfully placed in meaningful work. This was increase of 105 successful rehabilitations over the 1,900 in FY 2005.

As of March 31, 2007, there were 1,132 successful rehabilitations recorded. It is anticipated that AZRSA will be able to exceed AZRSA performance for FY 2006.

**Performance Indicator 1.2**

*The minimum federal standard is 55.8%.*

On September 30, 2006, the AZRSA rehabilitation rate was 47.1%. This was slightly less than the 48.5% posted in FY 2005.

As of March 31, 2007 the rehabilitation rate for AZRSA was 51.8%. This performance is below the federal minimum standard but is slightly higher than the 47.1% posted for 2006. It is anticipated that since all priority groups are being served, the rehabilitation rate will increase sufficiently to meet the federal performance level by September 2007.

**Performance Indicator 1.3**

*The minimum federal standard is 72.6%.*

On September 30, 2006, the percentage of individuals working in competitive employment settings (of all individuals rehabilitated) was 92.4%. This exceeds the federal minimum standard and was slightly higher than the 91.8% posted in FY 2005.

As of March 31, 2007, the percentage was 94.4%.

**Performance Indicator 1.4**

*The minimum federal standard is 62.4%.*

For FY 2006, the percentage of individuals with significant disabilities working in competitive settings performance level was 97.9%. This significantly exceeds the federal minimum and was an increase from the prior year, which was 95.6%.

As of March 31, 2007, the percentage was 96.8%. It is anticipated that AZRSA will continue to maintain a high performance level for indicator 1.4.

**Performance Indicator 1.5**

*The federal minimum requirement is 0.52.*

For FY 2006, the ratio of average hourly wage of individuals successfully rehabilitated in competitive employment with wages greater than or equal to the federal minimum wage to the average hourly wage was 0.57. This exceeds the federal minimum and was the same level that AZRSA achieved in the prior year

As of March 31, 2007, AZRSA ratio was 0.59. This is slightly higher than the FY 2006 ratio.

**Performance Indicator 6**

*The federal minimum requirement is 53%.*

In FY 2006, AZRSA's percentage of increase of individuals who report monthly wages as primary source of income was 85.2%. This exceeds the federal minimum and was significantly higher than the 69.1% posted in FY 2005.

As of March 31, 2007, was 86.9%. This is an increase from 85.2% from last year.

**Performance Indicator 2.1**

*The minimum federal standard is 0.80.*

In FY 2006, AZRSA's ratio of the service rate for minorities to the service rate for non-minorities was 0.89. This exceeds the federal minimum and was slightly higher than the rate posted for FY 2005 of 0.88.

As of March 31, 2007, AZRSA's ratio was at 0.85. Despite this slight drop, AZRSA expects to continue to meet or exceed the minimum required performance level for FY 2008.

**E. USE OF TITLE 1 FUNDS FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES**

AZRSA continues to significantly support ongoing program development activities through projects (under Services to Groups) which address identified needs, to carry out outreach activities and to overcome barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities.

**1. Priorities for innovation and expansion activities initiated in 2004, based on the 2003 comprehensive assessment of needs, were:**

- a. AZRSA requested Project applications in SFY 2004. Awards were made using a competitive State Grant process and the following competitive projects were funded:
  - i. Programs to develop coordinated transportation resources for VR clients needing to travel back and forth to training or employment. The purpose of these projects is primarily to develop methods or systems to coordinate and maximize the use of existing transportation resources, but may include the purchase of vehicles.

**Project funded:**

<i>Helping Hands</i>	<i>Northern Coconino County and the western Navajo Reservation</i>	<i>Project will create a transportation system for individuals with disabilities in Page, AZ and vicinity which includes the western part of the Navajo Reservation.</i>
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- ii. Programs benefiting behavioral health consumers who are applicants or participants of the VR directed at one or more of the following goals.

The purpose of these projects is to create competitive integrated employment opportunities for persons with a serious mental illness (SMI). "Integrated setting" is defined as: A setting typically found in the community in which applicants or eligible individuals interact with non-disabled individuals who are providing services to those applicants or eligible individuals, to the same extent that non-disabled individuals with comparable positions interact with other persons. "Competitive" means that individuals will earn at least minimum wages.

- To develop and expand partnerships with business/industries including National Industries for the Severely Handicapped (NISH) that will result in training and integrated employment opportunities (or direct placements) in specified employment sectors.
- To develop a consumer operated retail, service or manufacturing business. A consumer operated business must be primarily run by consumers. The consumer operated operation may be part of a larger agency/business that provides training, technical and administrative support and assistance to the consumer-run organization or be assisted by the non-profit or public agency.
- To assist individuals with SMI to work in entry level professional positions.

AZRSA envisions such positions to include, but not be limited to: job coaches, job developers, case managers and/or eligibility workers. Assistance could include: educational counseling; provision of preparatory training/education;

#### 4.11(e)(2) Evaluation and Reports of Progress

supported education services while individuals are in training/education; identification of employment opportunities and recruitment of individuals with SMI for such jobs; provision of intensive supports to individuals with SMI and to the agencies who hire them.

- To develop a training program for employees of public agencies, such as fire or police departments, on how to work effectively and correctly with persons with SMI in crisis situations (where such training may not be currently available or such cooperation doesn't currently exist), to deliver such training, and to create ongoing links between fire and police departments and local agencies serving persons with SMI.

AZRSA envisions local Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP) in rural Arizona assessing local needs, obtaining commitments from participating organizations, developing a training program, providing this training, and creating ongoing links between local CRP providers, Regional Behavioral Health Authorities (RBHA) agencies, VR program staff and local police and fire department personnel. A major cause for loss of jobs by persons with SMI is entanglements with law enforcement personnel. A greater sensitivity to needs of persons with SMI and a greater cooperation between agencies that serve this population can reap benefits for all and save many jobs for VR clients after they are employed.

#### Projects funded:

<i>Coyote Task Force (Café 54)</i>	<i>Tucson area</i>	<i>Project creates a consumer run business. This will be an upscale café in the heart of downtown Tucson.</i>
<i>Beacon Group (Paper Shredding)</i>	<i>Tucson area</i>	<i>Project will increase capability of the CRP to compete for state set-aside projects and increase employment opportunities for individuals with the most significant disabilities.</i>
<i>La Frontera Center</i>	<i>Tucson area</i>	<i>Project expands the capacity of employment and employment support services that will be delivered inside the recovery model.</i>
<i>META (Job Coaching)</i>	<i>Phoenix area</i>	<i>Project creates a training program for persons with serious mental illness to become job coaches.</i>
<i>Pinal Gila Behavioral Health (Pinal Hispanic Council)</i>	<i>Pinal County</i>	<i>Project establishes the capacity for the Pinal Hispanic Council to offer employment and employment support opportunities to individuals with serious mental illness.</i>
<i>Department of Health Services/ State Hospital</i>	<i>Statewide</i>	<i>Project establishes a consumer run gift shop on the state hospital grounds to serve as an employment training</i>

4.11(e)(2) Evaluation and Reports of Progress

		<i>program for soon to be released patients.</i>
<i>Coyote Task Force (Our Place Clubhouse)</i>	<i>Tucson area</i>	<i>Project expands the capacity of the Fountain House Model clubhouse to create employment and employment support opportunities for individuals with serious mental illness.</i>
<i>SEABHS (Partnership in Training)</i>	<i>Southeast Arizona</i>	<i>Project creates the capacity to provide sensitivity and best practice (for persons with SMI) training to law enforcement and emergency medical personal in Southeastern Arizona.</i>
<i>Direct (Training at Nursing Home)</i>	<i>Tucson area</i>	<i>Project creates a job training and peer mentoring opportunity for persons with serious mental illness. It also affords long term nursing home patients with visits and outside relationships.</i>
<i>NARBHA (Tailgate Café)</i>	<i>White Mountain Apache Reservation</i>	<i>Project creates a consumer run business (café) on the White Mountain Apache Reservation at White river.</i>
<i>NARBHA (Upholstery/Bicycle Repair)</i>	<i>Winslow Area</i>	<i>Project expands two consumer run business to allow for additional employment and training opportunities for individuals with serious mental illness.</i>
<i>NARBHA (Peer Mentor Training)</i>	<i>Flagstaff Area</i>	<i>Phase I grant to develop strategy to create peer mentoring program with Department clients who have serious mental illness, are victims of domestic violence and receive TANF services</i>
<i>Direct (One Stop)</i>	<i>Tucson Area</i>	<i>Phase I grant to develop a strategy for One-Stops in Southeastern Arizona to create a capacity to serve individuals with serious mental illness.</i>
<i>MARC Center</i>	<i>East Valley</i>	<i>Phase I grant to create meaningful job training opportunities or consumer run business in Maricopa County.</i>

iii. Programs to increase the employment of individuals with disabilities with community employers directed at one or both of the following goals:

- To coordinate resources available to community employers in the recruitment, hiring and retention of individuals with disabilities.

AZRSA envisions one or more project(s) to coordinate community employers' access to methods and resources: (a) to identify recruit, hire and retain persons with significant disabilities in employment; (b) to help employers to



make working environments accessible to persons with disabilities; and (c) to train/educate managers, supervisors and fellow employees on disability and disability issues on behalf of, and working with, the "Employment Disability Resources Network" (a consortium comprised of AZRSA/VR, AZ Job Service, Community Rehabilitation Program providers, the AZ Business Leadership Network and the SRC).

- To provide a forum for regular interaction between AZRSA management and community employers.

AZRSA envisions these projects as developing an ongoing mechanism to develop, coordinate and manage regular and meaningful interactions between AZRSA decision makers and community employers.

**No Projects were funded for this Priority.**

- iv. Programs benefiting persons who are blind or visually impaired directed at one or more of the following goals, separately or together:

- To develop, expand, or improve a comprehensive adjustment services program for transition high school students who are blind or visually impaired to include:

- Rehabilitation Instructional Services
- Adjustment to Disability
- Assistive Technology Services/Equipment
- College Preparation

AZRSA envisions that services provided through such a program will result in a seamless transition from high school to Vocational Rehabilitation. Rehabilitation Instructional Services, Adjustment to Disability, assistive technology services, and college preparation (where appropriate), when provided in a coordinated and comprehensive manner, will expedite a student's progress towards achieving economic self-sufficiency through work.

These services should result in the student having the necessary adaptive skills and the self confidence to be successful in employment or in post secondary education/skill training.

To develop, expand, or improve a comprehensive adjustment service program for adults who are blind or visually impaired to include:

- Rehabilitation Instructional Services
- Adjustment to Disability
- Assistive Technology Services/Equipment

AZRSA envisions that when Rehabilitation Instructional Services, Adjustment to Disability, and Assistive Technology Services are provided in a coordinated and efficient manner, clients will complete these services in a much shorter

#### 4.11(e)(2) Evaluation and Reports of Progress

period of time. This will, in turn, expedite the client's achievement of his/her vocational goal. In some instances where these services are already available, this might be achieved by adding just a coordination function that would allow clients to receive all services in a coordinated manner. In other instances, an agency might have to add one or more services to develop the necessary service array as well as adding a coordination function.

- To develop, expand, or improve a vocational readiness, work exploration, trial employment, specific job training program designed specifically for adults and/or transition students who are blind or visually impaired.

AZRSA envisions that one or more of the following services will be combined to provide a Comprehensive Career Exploration program: assessments to determine aptitude, interests and abilities; career exploration activities including job shadowing and work experience; vocational guidance and counseling; instruction in conducting labor market surveys, completing applications, developing a resume, interviewing skills, trial employment and specific job training. The services under this goal could be combined with the Goals 1 or 2 which deal with comprehensive adjustment services.

#### Projects funded:

<i>Arizona Center for the Blind</i>	<i>Phoenix Area</i>	<i>This project targets blind and visual impaired adults by expanding the capacity to provide adjustment and creating capacity for work readiness services and career development services.</i>
<i>Southern Arizona Association (Independence)</i>	<i>Tucson Area</i>	<i>This project targets youth and creates a two week summer residential program by focusing on adjustment to blindness.</i>
<i>Southern Arizona Association (PREP)</i>	<i>Tucson Area</i>	<i>This project targets adults and establishes new community based work adjustment and job training sites.</i>
<i>Foundation for the Blind (not AT Consultation)</i>	<i>Statewide</i>	<i>Adults – The project expands capacity for rehabilitation teaching, orientation and mobility, and blindness adjustment services. It develops an on-line training program for assistive technology that targets rural areas. Youth – The project creates career exploration service, textbook transcription, a summer residential college prep experience, and expands the summer youth independent living program.</i>
<i>Arizona Orientation</i>	<i>Statewide</i>	<i>Phase I grant to explore the feasibility</i>

#### 4.11(e)(2) Evaluation and Reports of Progress

<i>and Adjustment Center</i>		<i>of an Arizona residential adjustment center for individuals who are blind.</i>
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- v. Programs to make One-Stop Workforce Development Centers a viable and significant resource for persons with disabilities. Projects that will be considered for funding include, but are not limited to:

- Hiring and training disability specialists/coordinators to work within One-Stop Career Centers.
- Creating and supporting a cross-disability resource center/program (e.g. self-help peer support groups, disability benefits counseling, management of Impairment Related Work Expense (IRWE), Plan for Achieving Self Sufficiency (PASS) plans, and a staffed resource center, etc.) for persons with disabilities within the One-Stop Career Center.
- Creating and/or supporting transportation resources to make One-Stop services available to persons with disabilities who have transportation needs.

#### **Projects funded:**

<i>Community Outreach Program for the Deaf</i>	<i>Statewide</i>	<i>Project will install video technology in One-Stops and at employer sites to allow for remote interpreting for individuals who are deaf.</i>
<i>Santa Cruz County One Stop</i>	<i>Santa Cruz County</i>	<i>Project will create large disability focus in the Santa Cruz One-Stop and create transportation capability for individual with disabilities.</i>
<i>Gila Employment</i>	<i>Gila County</i>	<i>Project is creating a Disability Navigator position in the Gila County One-Stop and to increase capacity for community employment of persons with disabilities.</i>
<i>Arizona Bridge to Independent Living</i>	<i>Maricopa County</i>	<i>Phase I grant to develop strategy to increase Disability Navigators in One-Stops currently with out Navigators.</i>

- vi. One program each within the Southern, Central and Northern districts of the state which will create an ongoing resource to AZRSA counselors in the area of rehabilitation technology for clients of the VR program. This resource will be a partnership with the VR Counselor.

Projects will include a package of services to include:

- developing, maintaining, and providing general resource information for easy access by counselors and VR clients;
- “general” rehabilitation technology assessments, \*
- technical assistance (both general and specific client issues),

#### 4.11(e)(2) Evaluation and Reports of Progress

- development, coordination and convening teams of experts, as necessary, to solve specific client issues and/or ,
- referrals to appropriate vendors (within the full range of rehabilitation engineering, assistive technology services, and assistive technology devices) to implement rehabilitation technology plans.

\*“General” rehabilitation technology assessments are at a level sufficient to understand the problem and the issues involved. These assessments must be thorough enough to make recommendations to the VR Counselor but they are not at a level of thoroughness necessary for providing or leading to a prescription. Supplemental evaluations from community providers in specific areas would be recommended and used for such evaluations.

#### Projects funded:

<i>Arizona Center for the Blind</i>	<i>Statewide</i>	<i>This project will create an extensive website clearing house for the use by AT staff and other professionals to post resources and other technical information. This project will also provide technical assistance on assistive technology to the State's One-Stop system and RSA resource rooms.</i>
<i>Easter Seals (Training/Consulting Team)</i>	<i>Central and Southern Arizona</i>	<i>This project will provide technical assistance and consultation to VR counseling staff in their geographical area. The project will also collaborate on the website.</i>
<i>Northern Arizona University</i>	<i>Northern Arizona</i>	<i>This project will provide technical assistance and consultation to VR counseling staff in their geographical area. The project will also collaborate on the website.</i>
<i>Foundation for the Blind (AT Consultation)</i>	<i>Central Arizona</i>	<i>This project will provide technical assistance and consultation to VR counseling staff in their geographical area. The project will also collaborate on the website.</i>

- vii. Programs to update and improve CRPs to keep them competitive and a viable and a significant resource for persons with disabilities who are clients of VR Program. Project goals that will be considered for funding include, but are not limited to, expansion of current programs to provide work activities or work exposure in areas such as clerical, secretarial, customer service and janitorial.

#### Projects funded:

<i>Beacon Group</i>	<i>Tucson</i>	<i>Project will increase capability of the</i>
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4.11(e)(2) Evaluation and Reports of Progress

<i>(Custodial)</i>		<i>CRP to compete for state set-aside projects and increase employment opportunities for individuals with the most significant disabilities.</i>
<i>Centers for Habilitation/TCH (Custodial)</i>	<i>Tucson</i>	<i>Project will increase capability of the CRP to compete for state set-aside projects and increase employment opportunities for individuals with the most significant disabilities.</i>
<i>Centers for Habilitation/TCH (Packaging)</i>	<i>Maricopa County</i>	<i>Project will increase capability of the CRP to compete for state set-aside projects and increase employment opportunities for individuals with the most significant disabilities.</i>
<i>Douglas ARC (Janitorial)</i>	<i>Southeast Arizona</i>	<i>Project will increase capability of the CRP to compete for state set-aside projects and increase employment opportunities for individuals with the most significant disabilities.</i>
<i>Douglas ARC (Grounds keeping)</i>	<i>Southeast Arizona</i>	<i>Project will increase capability of the CRP to compete for state set-aside projects and increase employment opportunities for individuals with the most significant disabilities.</i>
<i>Graham County ARC</i>	<i>Southeast Arizona</i>	<i>Project will increase capability of the CRP to compete for state set-aside projects and increase employment opportunities for individuals with the most significant disabilities.</i>
<i>Yuma WORC</i>	<i>Yuma area</i>	<i>Project will establish a consumer run silk screening business and will become a consumer run small business incubator</i>
<i>Quality Connections</i>	<i>Flagstaff area</i>	<i>Project will expand CRP business project (copier toner cartridge remanufacture) to create new job categories for both training and employment.</i>
<i>Blake (Janitorial)</i>	<i>Tucson area</i>	<i>Project will increase capability of the CRP to compete for state set-aside projects and increase employment opportunities for individuals with the most significant disabilities.</i>
<i>Goodwill (Temporary Employment Services)</i>	<i>Maricopa County</i>	<i>Project will create a Temp Employment Agency designed for individuals with disabilities who chose that employment</i>

		<i>option.</i>
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- viii. Programs to develop a system of supports for juveniles, who are in juvenile corrections or in the probation system and are clients of the VR program, to increase the chances of successfully completing a program of VR services and maintaining employment.

AZRSA envisions a CRP developing a program of social work and counseling supports and intervention strategies to increase the odds of youths, who have been referred to the VR program and are participating in services under an Individualized Plan for Employment, to complete high schools, complete their VR program, and to enter and maintain employment.

**No projects were started in this area.**

## **2. Evaluation and Report of Progress, to date, in achieving the goals and priorities for innovation and expansion activities identified above**

- a. *Projects to develop coordinated transportation resources for VR clients needing to travel back and forth to training or employment.*

One project (Helping Hands Agency) in Page, Arizona, was funded. This Project continues to be successful and is funded for its final year, ending in 2008.

- b. *Projects benefiting behavioral health consumers who are applicants or participants of the VR.*

Fourteen Projects were started. Eight projects have been completed.

The following projects continue to be successful. A final year of funding, ending in 2008, was requested and have been approved for:

- Coyote Task Force, Café 54
- Beacon Group, Paper Shredding Project
- La Frontera Center, Increase capacity for "Recovery Model" project
- Coyote Task Force, "Our Place Clubhouse"
- SEABHS, "Partnership in Training"
- NARBHA, "Tailgate Café"

- c. *Projects benefiting persons who are blind or visually:*

Five projects were started and all have been completed.

- d. *Projects to make One-Stop Workforce Development Centers a viable and significant resource for persons with disabilities.*

Four projects were started. Three have been completed.

The following Project continues to be successful. A final year of funding, ending in 2008, was requested and approved:

- The Community Outreach Project for the Deaf (COPD)

#### 4.11(e)(2) Evaluation and Reports of Progress

- e. *Projects which will create an ongoing resource to AZRSA counselors in the area of rehabilitation technology for clients of the VR program.*

Four projects were started. Three have been completed.

The following Project continues to be successful. A final year of funding, ending in 2008, was requested and approved:

- Foundation for the Blind, Consultation to staff and resource information dissemination in area of Assistive Technology

- f. *Projects to update and improve CRPs to keep them competitive and a viable and a significant resource for persons with disabilities who are clients of VR Program.*

Ten projects were started. Four projects have been completed.

The following Projects continue to be successful. A final year of funding, ending in 2008, has been requested and approved for:

- Beacon Group, Custodial Services
- Douglas ARC, Janitorial
- Douglas Arc, Grounds Keeping
- Graham County ARC
- Quality Connections, Copier toner cartridge re-manufacturing
- Blake Foundation, Janitorial

- g. *Projects to develop a system of supports for juveniles, who are in juvenile corrections or in the probation system and are clients of the VR program, to increase the chances of successfully completing a program of VR services and maintaining employment.*

**No projects were started in this area.**

### **3. Evaluation and Report of Progress in achieving other purposes for innovation and expansion activities**

AZRSA has outreached to identify and serve individuals with the most significant disabilities who are minorities in the following ways:

- AZRSA continues its cooperative program with the City of Phoenix Clear Path Program, which serves disabled inner-city youth, many of whom are minorities.
- AZRSA is shifting the location of VR offices to DES Multi-Service Centers and increasing VR Counselors assigned to One-Stop Career Centers, in an effort to integrate services and increase accessibility for clients.

AZRSA has overcome barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the VR and Supported Employment Programs in the following ways:

- AZRSA continues to have an available on-line self referral form.
- AZRSA continues to collaboratively work with a wide range of community partners and rehabilitation providers.

#### 4.11(e)(2) Evaluation and Reports of Progress

- AZRSA has begun to locate VR offices in different geographical areas and also with DES Multi-Service Centers and One-Stop Career Centers to reach a greater portion of potential clients.
- Expansion of the Navigator program has increased access and eliminated barriers for those individuals with disabilities on a statewide basis and has also increased linkages with other community programs.